



Illinois Safe Routes to School Program

Funding Application Guidance

PURPOSE

The purpose of this guidance is to explain the requirements, eligibility, and application process of the Illinois Safe Routes to School Program.

ABOUT SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) was established in August 2005 as a Federal-Aid program through the passage of SAFETEA-LU, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users. Through 2009, a total of \$612 million was allocated to provide funds to states to substantially improve the ability of primary and middle school students (grades Kindergarten through 8th) to walk and bicycle to school safely.

SRTS funds projects and programs that enable, encourage and make safe walking and bicycling to school. Over the last 40 years, the level of walking and bicycling to school among school-aged children has dropped from approximately half of all students to fewer than fifteen percent. This decline in active transportation has negatively impacted schools and children. Schools currently experience massive traffic congestion, unsafe conditions and decreased air quality. Additionally, a growing trend of sedentary lifestyles in children has been linked to a variety of health issues including respiratory disease, diabetes and obesity.

SRTS uses a multidisciplinary approach to improve conditions for the walk or bike to school. The program has three main goals:

- 1) to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school
- 2) to make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and

- 3) to facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity (within 2 miles) of primary and middle schools (grades K-8).

Safe Routes to School utilizes the five basic program components, known as the “5 E’s”, that comprehensively address obstacles and create solutions:

- Engineering – Creating operational and physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools that reduce speeds and potential conflicts with motor vehicle traffic, and establish safer and fully accessible crossings, walkways, trails and bikeways.
- Education – Teaching children about the broad range of transportation choices, instructing them in important lifelong bicycling and walking safety skills, and launching driver safety campaigns in the vicinity of schools.
- Enforcement – Partnering with local law enforcement to ensure traffic laws are obeyed in the vicinity of schools (this includes enforcement of speeds, yielding to pedestrians in crossings, and proper walking and bicycling behaviors), and initiating community enforcement such as crossing guard programs.
- Encouragement – Using events and activities to promote walking and bicycling.
- Evaluation – Monitoring and documenting outcomes and trends through the collection of data, including the collection of data before and after the intervention(s).

ILLINOIS SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

The Illinois Safe Routes to School Program is administered by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and funds both **infrastructure** (engineering) and **non-infrastructure** (education, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation) initiatives. A detailed list of eligible projects and activities in both the infrastructure and non-infrastructure categories appears later in this guide.

Key features of the Illinois SRTS Program include:

- *SRTS projects are funded at 100% with no local match required.*
- *SRTS is a reimbursement program* – meaning that project sponsors are responsible for fronting the cost of the project and will be reimbursed by IDOT.
- *Between 70% and 90% of funds will support infrastructure projects. 10% to 30% of funds will support non-infrastructure programs.*
- *The funding limit for infrastructure projects is \$400,000 PER PROJECT. All infrastructure projects combined on a single application can total no LESS than \$10,000.*
- *The funding limit for non-infrastructure projects is \$50,000 PER PROJECT. All non-infrastructure projects combined on a single application can total no LESS than \$2,000.*
- *All applications require an approved Illinois School Travel Plan* (see next section).

- *Only those projects and programs included in the corresponding School Travel Plan are eligible for funding.*
- *Multiple projects may be applied for by a single Sponsoring Agency, using a single application.*
- *Applications are accepted only through an online application process.* The online application form is available at <http://www.dot.il.gov/saferoutes/index.html>.

ILLINOIS SCHOOL TRAVEL PLAN

A completed *Illinois School Travel Plan* must be submitted to and approved by IDOT in advance of any funding application. The *Illinois School Travel Plan* is a separate process that outlines a school or community's intentions for making travel to and from school more sustainable and safe. It uses an online form, accessible only through the Illinois Safe Routes to School website. Schools and communities create their own unique *Illinois School Travel Plan* and submit it in advance of any funding request. *School Travel Plans must receive approval from the Illinois Department of Transportation before the online application process may be accessed.* Visit the web site for complete instructions on completing and submitting the *Illinois School Travel Plan*.

All projects and programs in the *Illinois School Travel Plan* will correspond directly to an application from the same school or community. Once a School Travel Plan has been completed for a particular applicant, the online system will automatically fill in certain fields of a corresponding application. This will eliminate the need to repeat the work accomplished in the *Plan*. Likewise, any projects and activities for which funding is being sought must be included in a pre-existing School Travel Plan.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Grade Levels: Safe Routes to School projects must focus on students in grades Kindergarten through 8th grade. Public grade schools, middle and jr. high schools and grade centers that serve these ages are eligible. High schools and early childhood centers (that serve only pre-school children) are not eligible.

Private Schools: Private and parochial schools may also apply for SRTS projects. Infrastructure projects that serve private school locations are allowed as long as they are located on the public right-of-way. This may include projects on private land that have public access easements. Non-infrastructure activities are also allowed at private and parochial schools. See the Federal Highways Administration's SRTS guidance for more details (<http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferoutes/srtsguidance.htm>).

Project sponsors: A major attribute of SRTS programs is their collaborative nature. Schools, parents, students, local governments and agencies, community groups, non-profit organizations and health

interests all work together toward the goal of safe and accessible walking and bicycling for the trip to school. For this reason, a variety of both public and non-profit entities may act as SRTS applicants:

- Schools
- School districts
- Political subdivisions (municipalities, counties, townships)
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations
- Local, regional and state agencies (health departments, police departments)
- Non-profit organizations (PTA/PTO, community organization, health association, etc.)

For the purpose of the application, the group who will be administering the project(s) must apply as the Sponsoring Agency. A single Sponsoring Agency will be responsible for administering all project components of the application. The Sponsoring Agency will act as the fiscal agent for all projects and will front the initial funds for the project. Funds will be reimbursed through the SRTS program. If specific projects are to be administered by separate sponsors (eg a municipality for infrastructure projects, a school district for education programs, a police department for enforcement programs), a separate application will be required from each sponsor.

Project scale: Likewise, projects may serve schools at several different jurisdictional levels:

- Single school level
- Multiple schools in close proximity (2 miles)
- School district level
- City or municipal
- County
- Regional
- Statewide

EVIDENCE OF CONSULTATION

Resolutions of Support and Administration and **Letters of Support** must be obtained for all Safe Routes to School applications in order to be eligible for SRTS funds.

For infrastructure applications: Two resolutions are required for all applications including infrastructure projects.

1. One **Resolution or Letter of Support** must come from a sponsoring municipal, county, regional or state governmental authority. The governmental unit must have jurisdiction over the relevant infrastructure. If more than one jurisdiction is involved (e.g. both county and local roads), resolutions from all jurisdictional authorities are required. The sponsoring governmental unit will be responsible for project administration, including timely bid letting and oversight of design and construction.

2. A second **Resolution or Letter of Support** must be obtained from the School District for all infrastructure projects.

For non-infrastructure only applications:

1. One Resolution or Letter of Support must be obtained from the School District for all non-infrastructure projects.
2. A second Resolution or Letter of Support must be obtained from the agency/organization supporting the non-infrastructure project (e.g. police departments for enforcement programs, etc.)

Optional for all applications: Additional letters of support from other project partners (PTAs/PTOs, Local School Councils, non-profit organizations, public health agencies) may accompany any application.

Since the application process is online, **Resolutions** and **Letters of Support** must be in electronic form and uploaded as an attachment to the online application. The upload feature may be found on the last page of the application.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Only the projects and programs identified in the School Travel Plan will be eligible for funding. In other words, if an application seeks funding for something that is not included in the corresponding *School Travel Plan*, the application will not be considered.

The online application process can accommodate requests for multiple types of projects and programs. For example, a single sponsor may apply for funding to support several infrastructure projects, along with education, encouragement and enforcement programs.

Following is a list of fundable activities through the Illinois Safe Routes to School Program:

Eligible Infrastructure Projects: (must be located within 2-miles of a school)

- **Sidewalk Improvements**
 - New Sidewalk
 - Sidewalk Repair
 - Sidewalk Gap Closure
 - Sidewalk Widening
 - Sidewalk Curb
 - Sidewalk Curb Ramp
- **Traffic Calming/Speed Reduction**
 - Roundabout/Traffic Circle
 - Bulb-out
 - Speed Bump/Hump/Table
 - Raised Crossing
 - Median Refuge/Center Crossing
 - Narrowed Traffic Lane
 - Chicane
 - Choker
 - Lane Reductions
 - Full/Half Street Closure
 - Automated Speed Enforcement

- **Traffic Control Devices**
 - New/Upgraded Traffic Signal
 - New Pavement Markings
 - New Traffic Striping
 - In-Roadway Crossing Light
 - Flashing Beacons
 - Vehicle Speed Feedback Sign
 - Bike Sensitive Signal Actuation Devices
 - Pedestrian Activated Signal Upgrades
 - Pedestrian Countdown Signals
- **Traffic Diversion**
 - Separation of bicycles and pedestrians from traffic adjacent to school facilities
 - New/Revised Pick-up/Drop-off Zone
 - Traffic diversion away from school zone or designated route to school
- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Crossing Improvements**
 - Crossing
 - Median Refuge
 - Raised Crossing
 - Sight Distance Improvements
 - Pedestrian Bridge
 - Pedestrian Tunnel
- **On Street Bicycle Facilities**
 - New/Upgraded Bike Lane
 - Widened Outside Lanes/Shoulders
 - Geometric Improvements
 - Turning Lanes
 - Channelization
 - Roadway Realignment
 - Traffic Signs
 - Pavement Markings
- **Off Street Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities**
 - Exclusive Multi-Use Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail that is separated from the roadway
- **Secure Bicycle Parking Facilities**
 - Bike Racks
 - Bike Lockers
 - Designated Area with Safety Lighting
 - Covered Bike Shelter

Within this set of fundable infrastructure projects, the following costs are reimbursable through the Safe Routes to School Program:

- 1. Preliminary Engineering 1/ Environmental Evaluation**
- 2. Preliminary Engineering 2**
- 3. Right of Way Acquisition**
- 4. Construction**
- 5. Construction Engineering**

Both in-house and consultant engineering and construction staff time is reimbursable in these categories. If you are unsure as to whether a certain project or activity is eligible, consult a traffic planning or engineering professional, or contact the Illinois Department of Transportation.

Eligible Non-Infrastructure Activities:

- **Enforcement**
 - Costs for additional equipment needed for enforcement activities
 - Crossing guard training programs
 - Parent or student patrol programs
 - Lower speed limits in school vicinity
 - Speed feedback trailers or signs
- **Education**
 - Creation of educational materials
 - Bicycle and pedestrian and pedestrian safety curricula, materials and trainers.
 - Teach pedestrian and bicycle safety skills to students and parents
 - Organize a bicycle rodeo to teach on bike skills
 - Teach personal safety skills to students and parents
 - Teach the health, environmental and sustainable transportation benefits of walking and bicycling to students
 - Educate parents and caregivers about safe driving procedures at the school
 - Training, including SRTS training workshops that target school and community level audiences
- **Encouragement**
 - SRTS promotional campaigns and materials
 - Modest rewards for SRTS contests and programs
 - Incentive programs that encourage safe walking and bicycling over time
 - Walking School Bus programs
 - Bike Train programs
 - International Walk to School Day or other special event
 - Walking/biking mileage clubs
 - Park-and-walk program
 - Neighborhood Watch initiative
 - Community safe driving awareness and education campaigns
 - Safety and educational tokens that also advertise the program
- **Evaluation**
 - Costs for data gathering, analysis and evaluation reporting at the local project level.
 - Photocopying, duplication and printing costs
 - Mailing costs
 - Counting the number of students who walk and bicycle to and from school (***will be mandated for funded projects – federal reporting***)
 - Tracking the number of crashes within 2 miles of school (***will be mandated for funded projects – state reporting***)
 - Measuring parent/guardian perceptions of safety (***will be mandated for funded projects – federal reporting***)

While we have attempted to include all possible Safe Routes to School projects within this list, please contact the SRTS coordinator for guidance if you would like to pursue a project that is not listed here.

Within this set of fundable non-infrastructure projects, the following costs are reimbursable through the Safe Routes to School Program:

- 1. Equipment and Supplies**
- 2. Educational Materials**
- 3. Promotions, Incentives or Publicity**
- 4. Planning and Evaluation**
- 5. Associated Education and Training**
- 6. Printing and Copying**
- 7. Consultant Services**

Staff time for school, police or other program personnel is NOT reimbursable in these categories.

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Recurring and operational costs, such as salaries and overhead, will not be funded. **Expenses for existing, expanding or new program staff time are considered operational expenses and not eligible for SRTS funding. However, in-house engineering and construction personnel are eligible to be funded.**

The use of funds for projects that reorganize pick-up and drop-off primarily for the convenience of drivers rather than to improve child safety and/or walking and bicycling access is not permitted. School bus safety programs and improvements to school bus stops are not eligible for this funding.

SUPPLEMENTAL SUPPORTING MATERIALS

You may wish to attach additional materials that support or provide extra information related to your proposed project. This may include photos or designs of the affected area(s), school wellness policies, survey results, walking audit findings, event photographs, etc. The last page of the application contains the feature for directly uploading these materials. This is purely optional, and will not count toward your application's score.

FUNDING LEVELS

Between 70% and 90% of total SRTS funds will support infrastructure projects. Between 10% and 30% of funds will support non-infrastructure programs. The actual division of funds will be determined according to the number and types of proposals that are submitted.

- **Each individual infrastructure project may not exceed \$400,000.**
- **The lower limit for all infrastructure projects combined on a single application is \$10,000.**
- **Each individual non-infrastructure project may not exceed \$50,000.**
- **The lower limit for all non-infrastructure projects combined is \$2,000.**

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Selected projects are required to comply with a variety of Federal and State requirements in order to proceed. Below is a listing of key requirements that will be the responsibility of the applicant.

- **ADA:** Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) includes all infrastructure requirements and making program materials available in alternative formats.
- **TIP:** Safe Routes to Schools funds must be programmed in a metropolitan planning organization's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
- **MUTCD:** Signage, striping and pavement marking projects must follow Illinois DOT design and signage standards as outlined in the Manual on Universal Traffic Control Devices.
- **NEPA:** Except in unusual circumstances, most SRTS infrastructure projects will fall under categorical environmental exclusions that recognize construction of bicycle and pedestrian lanes, paths, and facilities as not involving significant environmental impacts. Where exclusions do not apply, projects are expected to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- **Title 23:** Safe Routes to School program must comply with Davis Bacon prevailing wage rates, competitive bidding, and other contracting requirements, etc, even for projects not located within the right-of-way of a federal-aid highway.

PROJECT SELECTION AND SCORING

The IDOT Safe Routes to School Implementation Committee will organize and distribute copies of the applications for review and evaluation. The review committee(s) will utilize the following selection criteria for project evaluation.

Proposals will be scored based on seven main criteria:

1. Potential to reduce child traffic injuries and fatalities
2. Potential to increase walking and bicycling among students
3. Identification of safety hazards
4. Identification of potential walking and bicycling routes
5. Consultation and support for projects by school-based associations, local traffic engineers, local elected officials, law enforcement agencies and school officials
6. Proximity to parks and other recreational facilities

Projects may be evaluated and selected for full or partial funding.

Official notification of awards will be made by IDOT via the regular mail. A Local Agency Agreement between the sponsor and IDOT District office will commence shortly after notification.

